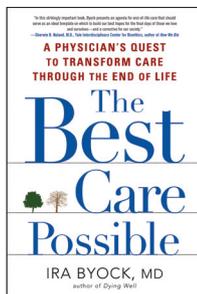


BOOKS

The Best Care Possible: A Physician's Quest to Transform Care Through the End of Life. Ira Byock. New York, NY: Avery, 2012, hardcover, 336 pages, \$26.



The Best Care Possible: A Physician's Quest to Transform Care Through the End of Life begins as a book of compelling stories steeped in many years of clinical practice. These stories are

about people, families, and those who care for them. Insightful words illustrate this humanness: "Dying doesn't cause suffering. Resistance to dying does" (p. 57).

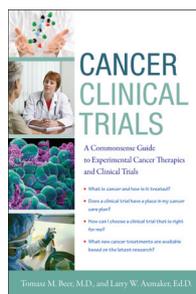
Ira Byock, MD, director of palliative medicine at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and a professor at Dartmouth Medical School, takes from these stories a vision for something better. His vision is not only anecdotal, but current research, particularly the evidence that supports palliative care, is cited. One highlight is the 2008 study led by Oncology Nursing Society member Marie Bakitas, DNSc, APRN, AOCN®, FAAN, which found in a retrospective chart review that patients seen by the palliative-care team were more likely to have documented advance directives (72% versus 48%), less likely to die in intensive care (25% versus 67%), averaged fewer invasive interventions, and were more likely to have family present at the time of death.

The framework of Byock's vision is not a medical one with attendant medical solutions. It is a larger social framework that includes naturally occurring retirement communities, all-inclusive care for older adults, and accessible long-term care. Extraordinary challenges carry extraordinary opportunities. "By caring well for our frailest and most vulnerable members, Americans can help raise expectations and improve care for many people right now and in the years to come. We can make it clear

that the best care possible does not stop with excellent disease treatments; that it includes concerns for a person's physical comfort, emotions, and spiritual well-being" (p. 295). As I contemplate this physician's platform, I am moved to ask, isn't this the essence of nursing?

Patricia Ringos Beach, MSN, RN, AOCN®, ACHPN, is a clinical nurse specialist in oncology and palliative care and patient navigator at the Mercy Cancer Center in Toledo, OH.

Cancer Clinical Trials: A Commonsense Guide to Experimental Cancer Therapies and Clinical Trials. Tomasz M. Beer & Larry W. Axmaker. New York, NY: DiaMedica, 2012, softcover, 192 pages, \$16.95.



Cancer Clinical Trials: A Commonsense Guide to Experimental Cancer Therapies and Clinical Trials is an easily understandable and comprehensive text for anyone who needs accurate and organized information as they are considering enrollment in a cancer clinical trial.

Beer, a medical oncologist, and Axmaker, a retired psychologist, cancer survivor, and clinical trial participant, begin with a discussion about the nature of cancer itself and of the various modalities used in its treatment. From there, they take the reader on a journey through the anatomy of a research trial. Rather than only defining each component, the authors infuse the narrative with the rich history behind it. For example, instead of simply defining "randomization," the reader is informed about how a randomized clinical trial reduced the number of total mastectomies in favor of lumpectomies. This approach solicits an appreciation for the complexity and discernment that is part of a clinical trial.

Along the way, common questions are anticipated and answered. In a discussion about different trial phases, the authors explain why each phase might be appropriate for a different person. After winding the reader through this large desert of information, the authors provide the oasis: an overview of how

clinical trials have impacted cancer care. This is the reassurance of the value of participating in studies despite the rigorous and sometimes tedious procedures.

As oncology nurses know, clinical trials for cancer are introduced to patients and their families at very stressful times; either they are newly diagnosed and still facing the flood of new information, or it is at time of recurrence or progression when perhaps their worst fear is being realized. To them, the thought of reading a book may seem overwhelming; however, using it as a reference or companion to other information and support that is given may seem less daunting.

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Seeing Patients: Unconscious Bias in Health Care. Augustus A. White III and David Chanoff. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, hardcover, 352 pages, \$29.



White offers a valuable and unique perspective through the book *Seeing Patients: Unconscious Bias in Health Care*. He offers a retrospective timeline detailing the rise of healthcare disparities in varied minority populations including women, older adults, gay men and lesbian women, and racial groups. Grounding the book through self-reflection and autobiography, the text is written with a raw honesty that is shocking and informative.

Using his personal journal as a guide, the remainder of the text uses White's personal experiences and practical suggestions while elaborating on themes of discrimination and stigmatization. The greatest strength of the book is the ability of White and coauthor Chanoff to capture the depth and contradiction of White's experience as an African American medical student, physician, and human being. Issues of diversity and discrimination became a lifelong passion that would follow him down many paths, including medical faculty member and orthopedic chief at Harvard.

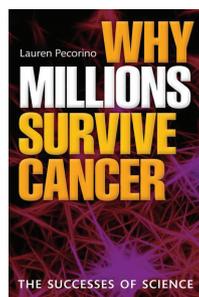
The most demanding chapters are situated at the end of the book (10–12) and constitute heavy discussion of healthcare disparity, cultural competence, and humanistic care. The epilogue confirms what the reader has suspected the entire book—best medical care is still afforded to Caucasian, heterosexual, middle-class men. The short “Some Practical Suggestions for Patients and Physicians” section, along with a bureaucratic list of the “National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services,” felt tacked on as a feel-good ending.

Written for both healthcare professionals and lay readers, *Seeing Patients* is a book that challenges the reader to face personal demons when dealing with the “other.” The book is extremely timely, with increasing emphasis in the scholarly literature on topics not only of cultural and racial bias in health care, but also on other influencing factors such as optimism and gender. The text is easy to navigate with an effortless flow. A sprinkling of pictures adds depth to the written word but leaves the reader wanting more.

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NEW RELEASES

Why Millions Survive Cancer: The Successes of Science. Lauren Pecorino. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012, softcover, 256 pages, \$17.95

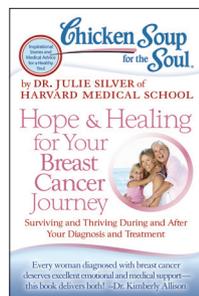


Pecorino illuminates this enormous and recent progress in fighting cancer, painting an intriguing portrait of scientific breakthroughs, the leading scientists behind these key discoveries, and the steps that everyone can take to reduce exposure to cancer.

Today, more than 12 million cancer survivors just in the United States alone are alive as a result of extraordinary advances in science and medicine. In *Why Millions Survive Cancer*, Lauren Pecorino illuminates this enormous and recent progress in fighting cancer, painting an intriguing portrait of scientific breakthroughs, the leading scientists behind these key discoveries, and the steps that everyone can take to reduce exposure to cancer.

The struggle against cancer has been long and difficult, but as Pecorino shows, the tide is changing, and changing rapidly. Treatments are becoming gentler and more effective. Many newly developed drugs have fewer side effects and can be administered as a pill rather than via IV, giving patients a better quality of life. Better response rates are occurring for treatments that are targeted against the genetic characteristics of a tumor. Advances in instrumentation, robotics, and imaging have led to more precise and less invasive surgical procedures. Public awareness about carcinogens is spreading and, increasingly, people are avoiding cigarettes, alcohol, and excessive exposure to the sun. As Pecorino discusses these exciting new developments, she provides readers with fascinating accounts of medical research and the discoveries that have been made about the nature of cancer and the ways to defeat it.

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Hope and Healing for Your Breast Cancer Journey: Surviving and Thriving During and After Your Diagnosis and Treatment. Julie Silver. Cos Cob, CT: Chicken Soup for the Soul, 2012, softcover, 224 pages, \$9.95.

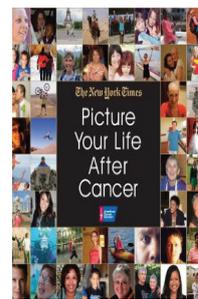


Inspiring Chicken Soup for the Soul stories are now combined with accessible leading-edge medical information from Julie Silver, MD, of Harvard Medical School. The stories in this book from women with breast cancer and their family members, along with the up-to-date medical information provided, will give readers inspiration, strength, and hope. This book will educate and comfort patients and serve as a

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support group from diagnosis through treatment to rehabilitation and recovery.

Picture Your Life After Cancer. *New York Times*. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2012, hardcover, 160 pages, \$19.95.



The wide-ranging impact that cancer can have on a life in the months and years after the last doctor’s appointment is documented in photos in this meaningful collection. In 2010, the *New York Times* asked readers who had survived cancer to send in their photos and answer the question, “How is your life different after cancer?” The resulting images and essays depict not only the new adventures and overjoyed faces of survivors, but also the honest pictures of loss, confusion, and sadness that reveal the not always happy life after survival. The words that complement the images contain stories of hope, trepidation, concern, and renewal, as well as sage advice on living a normal life as the specter of cancer recedes. Also included in the book are entries from relatives and spouses who cared for loved ones who received a cancer diagnosis, some of whom did not survive their battle with the disease. This moving look at life after cancer will help other survivors and patients realize that they are not alone.

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